

Literature, Film, and Theory for the Anthropocene New Directions in German Ecocriticism

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W 4:30-7:10 p.m.

German House Seminar Room (Room 102)

Professor Jason Groves

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-4:00 p.m.

This seminar examines the entanglement of the fate of the human and the fate of the earth on an increasingly imperiled planet. While this entanglement has been expressed within the geosciences in the informal designation of a new geological epoch—the *Anthropocene*—this term is also becoming an occasion to critically reexamine the place of the earth in the Humanities. Amidst the increasing recognition of the intervention of the *anthropos* into earth systems, this seminar draws on and extends the inroads that the *geos* has recently made into traditionally humanistic domains, including geophilosophy, ecocriticism, geontology, geopoetics, and geopolitics. At the same time—through readings including Kleist, Hoffman, Grass, Frisch, Wolf, and Sebald—the seminar proposes to unearth a geologic imaginary running through the literary history of modernity.

Extending recent attempts to widen the scope of ecocriticism and the Environmental Humanities beyond Anglophone literature, this seminar will offer an introduction to emerging ecocritical literature, models, and theories drawn from ecopoetics, postcolonial studies, gender studies, cultural geography, as well as German, English, and Comparative Literature. Readings will be oriented around four principal environmental threats associated with the Anthropocene and corresponding aesthetic, political, and ethical questions: 1) pollution 2) extinction 3) terraforming and 4) climate change. Theoretical readings are drawn mostly from contemporary voices, including Chakrabarty, Grosz, Haraway, Povinelli, Yusoff, Rigby, Colebrook, and Zylinska. This course is taught in English.

Course Requirements: 1 class presentation (10%), 2 response papers (30%), and 1 final research paper (60%).

Learning Goals: (1) Students will demonstrate familiarity with a variety of world literatures as well as methods of studying literature and culture across national and linguistic boundaries and evaluate the nature, function and value of literature from a global perspective. (2) Students will analyze a specific body of research and write a clear and well-developed paper or project about a topic related to more than one literary and cultural tradition.

Required Books (ordered through Rutgers University Bookstore, all other readings will be uploaded on Sakai)

Max Frisch, *Man in the Holocene* (Dalkey, 2011): ISBN 978-1564784667

Günter Grass, *The Rat* (Mariner Books, 1989) [ISBN: 978-0156758307]

Jussi Parikka, *The Anthrobscene* (UOM, 2104) [ISBN: 9780816696079]
W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (New Directions, 1999) [9780811214131]
Christa Wolf, *Accident: A Day's News* (UOC, 2001) [ISBN: 9780226905068]

Departmental Policies:

Attendance

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

Cell Phones

Cell phones and all other technological devices (beepers, iPods, MP3players...) must be turned off during class out of respect for the instructor and fellow students. Please schedule all important phone communications outside of class time.

Photocopies

Department photocopying fees add up quickly and impressively; we will therefore need to collect from each student 5 cents per page toward the cost of handouts other than quizzes and tests.

Disability Support Services

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity are an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

Tentative Seminar Schedule

Week 1 (1/21): Introduction: Welcoming the Anthropocene?
Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses."

Week 2 (1/28): Locating the Anthropocene I: Anthropocene Imaginaries
Joshua Clover and Juliana Spahr, *#misanthropocene*; Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I" ; Jussi Parikka, *The Anthrobscene*

Week 3 (2/4): Locating the Anthropocene II: Social geographies of the Anthropocene
Kathryn Yusoff, "Geological Life: prehistory, climate, futures in the Anthropocene" ; Nigel Clark, *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet* (Introduction; chapters 1, 4); Kleist, "Earthquake in Chile"

Week 4 (2/11): Underlands (Terraforming)
Johann Peter Hebel, "Unverhofftes Wiedersehen"; E.T.A. Hoffman, "The Mines of Falun"; Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, chapter 5; Theodor Ziolkowski, "The Mine: Image of the Soul"; Heather Sullivan, "Dirty Nature: Tales of Extraction"; (optional: Leni Riefenstahl, *The Blue Light*)

Week 5 (2/18): Petrofiction (Terraforming 2)

FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness*; Amitav Ghosh, "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel"; Forrest Gander, "The Carboniferous and Ecopoetics"; Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene"

Week 6 (2/25): Ethics for the Anthropocene

Joanna Zylińska, *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*; Timothy Clark, "Scale" from *Telemorphosis*

Week 7 (3/4): Toxic Discourse I (Pollution)

Wolfgang Hilbig, "Knacker's Yard"; Fatih Akin, *Polluting Paradise*; Lawrence Buell, "Toxic Discourse"; Juliana Spahr, "Gentle Now"

Week 8 (3/11): Toxic Discourse II (Pollution)

Christa Wolf, *Accident: A Day's News* ; Rob Nixon, "Introduction" from *Slow Violence*

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10 (3/25): Fictions of the End I (Extinction)

Günter Grass, *The Rat*; Ursula Heise, "Lost Dogs, Last Birds, and Listed Species: Cultures of Extinction"

Week 11 (4/1): Fictions of the End II (Extinction)

SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE

Claire Colebrook, *Essays on Extinction (I): Death of the Posthuman*

Week 12 (4/8): Fictions of the End III (Extinction)

Max Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*; Julian Pösler, *The Wall*

Week 13 (4/15): Global Ecologies (Climate Change)

W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*; Margaret Rhonda, "Mourning and Melancholia in the Anthropocene"; Jorie Graham, "Sea Change"

Week 14 (4/22): Global Ecologies II (Climate Change)

Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*; Juliana Spahr, "Unnamed Dragonfly Species"

Week 15 (4/29): Protocols for a New Nature: Reclamation, Remediation, Rewilding
TBD